

Information Center of Afrin Resistance



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AFRIN
RESISTANCE

Weekly News Bulletin on Afrin

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06.04.2018 - 12.04.2018

The Information Center of Afrin Resistance is providing direct information on 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 on Afrin 6th-12th 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 centre 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 and 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 83 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 Canton Afrin carries on, as well as the resistance of the displaced people from Afrin in Shehba region. Tension is increasing between USA and Russia over Syria and other states get more involved, such as France and UK.

War and Humanitarian Situation

According to estimations of the UN, there are still between 50,000 and 70,000 people in Afrin city. They find themselves trapped inside the devastated city, with little food and clean water, no power and sealed off by Syrian as well as Turkish military forces [1]. In the occupied territories of Afrin, "Olive Branch" forces are still interrupting electricity and water supply to most of the area. The people in Afrin still report looting and thefts in houses and public facilities, which remain without any equipment, machineries or supplies. Moreover, reports assert that humanitarian aids are distributed in front of the media's cameras as a propaganda strategy, but in Afrin countryside these humanitarian aids were sold at high prices to merchants and shop owners. The "Olive Branch" forces also arrested tens of citizens who stayed in the area. After being subjected to insults and humiliation they were transported to detention centers [2]. At the checkpoint deployed between the city and the countryside, the "Olive Branch" forces impose large sums of money to enter the city. Furthermore, they prevent hundreds of families to return to their villages. Therefore these families were forcibly located near these checkpoints for days in an attempt to return to their villages [3]. The people complain that most of the water provided was polluted and unfit for drinking, as well as that there is shortage of food and medical supply.

A FSA member, Fûad Elîko Îûraf, confessed that ENKS members in Afrin gave lists to Turkish army with family names which they had conflicts with, in order to make them being arrested and their houses burnt [4]. On this matter, Kurdish Leftist Party's member Fuad al-Ali said: "Kurdish Patriotic Council legalizes massacres committed by the Turkish occupation army against civilians" [5]. Moreover, "Olive Branch" forces are carrying out kidnappings of civilians. The Turkish occupation forces kidnapped Dr. Abdul Majid Sheikho, dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University

of Afrin from his home in Afrin [6]. According to local sources, FSA forces kidnapped 3 women from Sheikhotka village in Mobata district on April 7th. The villagers gathered and organized a protest in front of the FSA headquarters in the village. The 3 women have been released on April 10th, after the people threatened to escalate the protests [7].

The YPG/YPJ carried out several actions that targeted the Turkish army and FSA forces in Afrin Canton. In Kefer Sefrê village (Jindirese district) they destroyed an FSA base. In Afrin city, they carried out an action against a check point of the Turkish army injuring 2 Turkish soldiers and killing an al-Qaeda member called Abeed al-Azeez Nachar. As well as other actions in Afrin city, where a FSA headquarter next to Welat Street has been targeted, and in Nebî Hûrî -Shera District- [8] resulting in 11 FSA members killed and 6 injured.

Shehba and Northern Syria

The regime forces prevent displaced people from Afrin to move to Aleppo city. At the checkpoints, the regime forces impose sums of money around 1000\$ per person [9]. UNHCR (UN) noticed that the refugees from Afrin are living an alarming situation. According to them, 137,000 people displaced from the Afrin region are scattered across Tal Rifaat, Nubol, Zahraa and surrounding villages in northwest Aleppo. They are living in makeshift shelters, damaged or unfinished buildings, mosques, warehouses and open-spaces. UNHCR have distributed more than 1,400 kits for shelter rehabilitation and redeployed 1,000 UNHCR family-sized tents [10].

The autonomous self-administration of Afrin Canton and of Shehba people's municipality are working to fulfill the need of the displaced people from Afrin. The new "Serdem Camp" is being set up in Sosin village. The "Berxwedan Camp", in Fafin district, already hosts 3,000 civilians. In this camp, 9 tents have been equipped as schools for education in Kurdish and Arab language, because there are 407 primary and 51 middle school students in the camp. Fadel Jawish, member of the Education Committee, said that 25 teachers were in the camp and were ready to teach students, "Turkish occupation is working to include the Turkish language in Afrin schools, which is a threat to the future of children and obliteration of Kurdish culture,". Moreover, he appealed to UNICEF to support them to complete the children education in the camp. The next week the education will officially start. Nevertheless, still big efforts are necessary to fulfill the humanitarian needs of Afrin people displaced in Shehba region, especially medicine and medical supply [11].

New US troops have been deployed in Minbij and built two outpost in the surrounding. French and British troops have been deployed in the city as well.

The people from Minbij and others parts of Northern Syria hold a demonstration to show they are not afraid of Turkey's threats on the city and ready to resist invasion forces.

A farmer has been shot by Turkey soldiers in Abu al-Sawn village, near the border, in Sere Kaniye area, while he was watering his field. The same situation occurs in Kobane area, where farmers of Goran village cannot water their fields close to the border because Turkish snipers shot them.

Turkey uses water as a instrument of war. Especially, Turkey cut off the water flow of Euphrates River and Belîx river by use of dams, causing several problems to the people in Euphrates region: from irrigation to electricity production. Signs of drought are starting to appear due to the long term reduction in water, while the dams are only able to produce electricity 12 hours a day due to the drop in the water levels.

Turkey, Iraq, Syria:

Turkey's occupation of Afrin gave the IS the opportunity to reorganize, and ISIS gangs have increased their attacks in Iraq. ISIS gangs have captured two villages in Kirkuk yesterday evening. According to local sources, on April 11th it has been reported that the IS militias entered the villages of Hefteğar and Ava Fexro located in between Dahuk and Tuz Khurmatu, in Kirkuk area. They also carried out actions in Mosul, Hawija and Tal Afar.

On April 5th, Turkish warplanes bombed the region of Sîdekan connected to the district of Çoman in Hewler. Beside the ongoing bombing in various areas of Southern Kurdistan, the Turkish army continues its invasion attacks against Bradost region. According to reports, the Turkish army has intensified its aggression in an attempt to get deployed in Bradost permanently, differently from previous times. Several villages have been besieged by Turkish troops.

In Syria, this last days Syrian regime forces stroke heavily eastern Ghouta and a gas attack were reported by different sources. Hundreds have been killed since the beginning of the offensive and dozens of thousands people have been displaced. Syrian regime claimed on the 12th of April his control of the city of Douma.

Solidarity with Afrin

Four female prisoners – Kania Ağırman, Songül Coşkun, Şilan Çetiner and Fatma Berfe – held in Tardus Women's Closed Prison started an indefinite-irreversible hunger strike on March 15th. They demand the end to the isolation for the PKK Leader Abdullah Öcalan and to the attacks on Afrin: "As four political prisoners started an indefinite-irreversible hunger strike to appeal our two demands to be met. We call on all international organizations and public opinion to show awareness and to raise their voice in order to end the war and ongoing atrocity." [12]

New actions in solidarity with Afrin have been carried out in different countries. In Hamburg [13], Stuttgart, Munster, Hannover (Germany), Melbourne (Australia), Livorno and Florence (Italy), Basel and Bern (Switzerland) [14], where the police listed the personal identity details of 239 protesters. In Venice, Italy, protesters carried out an action against the Leonardo Agusta corporation calling to stop weapon deals with Turkey and end Afrin occupation [15].

On April 6th, a demonstration of women in Mannheim (Germany) demanded the freedom of Abdullah Öcalan and the end of the Turkish occupation in Afrin. On April 7th, a Kurdish bloc was formed at London demonstration for Gaza and the Great Return March; in fact they consider that the situations in Palestine and Afrin are both colonization and illegal occupation of lands.

Statements and analysis

The Stockholm Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies warns about the "threat of a genocide on Kurds in Turkey, Syria and Iraq" [16].

Top leaders of the Federation of Northern Syria at the European Parliament ask the EU to condemn the Turkish aggression and to pressure Turkey state to withdraw its army from Afrin. They also asked the EU to ensure the participation of the Northern Syria's representatives in the UN Geneva Peace Talks, to provide urgent humanitarian aid and to allocate the necessary fund for the reconstruction of the liberated areas [17].

Panos Mountzis, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, released a statement in which he expresses deep concerns about the massive displacement of civilians in Syria, the humanitarian crisis and the hostilities ongoing. He said: "It is critical that civilians be protected and

I echo the U.N. Secretary General in calling on all parties to the conflict to ensure respect for international humanitarian and human rights law, including humanitarian access across Syria to all people in need, as per relevant Security Council resolutions”[18].

On April 10th, NAV-DEM held a press conference in Hannover. They informed about the acting of German police against the Kurdish population, because a series of repressive action was launched against Afrin solidarity. This supports AKP regime and in this way indirectly the IS [19]. The Syrian Observatory calls to relief hundreds of thousands of the people displaced from Afrin and calls on the UN, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International parties to secure their return to their houses and villages and to ensure their safety [9]. The Labour Party (2ⁿ British party) delegation which was in Rojava asks for a US and UK intervention by deploying troops in Minbij to stop the Turkish aggression on Rojava [20].

Kongra Star, Rojava women movement, declared: "We have launched the second phase of our "Women Rise Up For Afrin" campaign. We have been holding marches, rallies & seminars as part of the campaign, and these will continue. The women of Afrin will resist to the end, and our protests will continue". Moreover, they demanded the end of Turkish occupation, the safe return for Afrin's people, the UN, international institutions and Human Rights organizations to ensure the security and human needs of the people from Afrin; as well as international justice for war crimes against humanity. They called on all the women of the world to resist for the liberation of Afrin and the victory of women's revolution.

The Grand Council of Basel Canton (Switzerland) adopted a resolution against the Turkish offensive in Afrin. It demands that the Federal Council commits itself to respecting international humanitarian law and demands it from Turkey [21]. In 2017, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) of the country rejected 48 export applications for war material. The exports were destined for 21 countries, including Turkey [22].

Talking about the Turkish invasion of Southern Kurdistan, Gorran Movement Hewler Headquarters Spokesperson Hêmin Mihemed said: “Turkish forces invade the Kurdistan Region and commit a crime”. Mihemed added that they will ask the Iraqi government to drive out Turkish troops from Kurdistan territory through diplomatic and political ways.

On April 6th, Russia, Iran and Turkey met in Ankara to discuss their future collaboration in Syria, as well as joint economical programs. Moreover, their agreement showed weak points. Russia’s Foreign Minister said that Russia expects Turkey to bring the Syrian town of Afrin under the control of the Syrian government [23]. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan criticized Lavrov’s statement, saying that is a “very wrong” approach to the future of Afrin [24].

Meanwhile repression against opposer of Erdogan inside and outside Turkey is increasing. The Ministry of Interior said that 337 social media accounts had been investigated and legal action had been taken against 154 people over last week. On February 26th, the Ministry also made public that 845 people who criticized Afrin operation on social media and participated in protests had been detained. Several HDP members, independent journalist, students and other opposer are massive detained in Turkey, only in the last week. In Turkey, 70,000 students have been either convicted or in jail [25]. Moreover, Erdogan phone called Yusuf Ünsal to congratulate for having attacked a tent demonstration in Stuttgart, Germany, in solidarity with Afrin. A German national was detained by Turkish security forces in Sirnak, southeast Turkey while trying to enter Syria, with the accusation of “assisting and abetting a terrorist organization”.

Turkey is either NATO allies and now a close partner with Russia, but Erdogan’s policy is now in a tight spot. In fact, over Syria, the confrontation between US-UK-France and Russia-Iran is

increasing, but both the parties involved do not seem to want a direct military confrontation in the near future. Turkey will try to benefit from the contradictions between the other international powers to realize its expansionist project over Syria and Iraq, as well as its war against Kurdish people.

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